



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](https://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ H-Gram 049: Battle of Okinawa

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) winds up his extensive coverage of the [Battle of Okinawa](#) with a discussion on the final bloody fighting on land and of the concurrent challenges faced by Allied naval vessels in countering Japanese mass kamikaze attacks. Director Cox also highlights the achievements of Lt. Cmdr. George Street, who took his submarine, [USS Tirante](#), on a nighttime surface attack into a harbor in Japanese-occupied Korea. Street received the [Medal of Honor](#) for the extraordinary feat. For more, [read H-Gram 049](#) at the [Director's Corner](#). In addition, read ["The Most Difficult Antiaircraft Problem Yet Faced by the Fleet": U.S. Navy vs. Kamikazes at Okinawa](#), a new essay by NHHC historian Shawn R. Woodford, Ph.D., at [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-79000/NH-79450.html>

## ★ Trailblazer—First Female Executive Officer Aboard USS Constitution

[USS Constitution](#) is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel afloat and America's Ship of State, built in 1797. The ship and her crew fought in the [War of 1812](#) and participated in antislavery patrols off the coast of Africa prior to the [Civil War](#). *Constitution* is berthed in Boston, MA. In 1996, Cmdr. Claire Bloom joined the crew as the first female Navy officer to do so. Denise Krepp of NHHC's Director's Action Group talked with Bloom recently about her [trailblazing experience](#). "Being the first female officer on *USS Constitution* was incredible, and by far, my favorite job of all the cool jobs I had in the military," said Bloom. "As the executive officer, I was directly responsible for the planning and implementation of the plan when we sailed the ship for the first time in 116 years." For more on their conversation, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/06/16/trailblazer-first-female-executive-officer-aboard-uss-constitution/>

## ★ Edith White, WWII "Code Girl," Dies at 96

When Forrest White was young, a naval officer came to his door in uniform with a box of chocolates and asked for Lt. Reynolds. White was confused because there wasn't a lieutenant or a Reynolds in the house. Then he remembered that his mother's maiden name was Reynolds. It would be the first time Edith Reynolds White's family learned about her service in the Navy's secretive codebreaking unit during [World War II](#). During the visit, they chatted about the last time they had met during the war. The officer had traveled to Washington, DC, with a dripping wet Japanese codebook recovered from a sinking enemy submarine. Edith, who was a shift commander at the time, strung the book up on a clothesline to dry and began to crack the code with other women in the unit. Those efforts helped Allied forces in the South Pacific, including during the [Battles of Leyte Gulf](#) and the [Philippine Sea](#). For more on White's life, [read the article](#) at Military.com.



**Photo Link:** [https://www.military.com/off-duty/2020/06/15/edith-white-world-war-ii-code-girl-dies-96.html?ESRC=eb\\_200616.nl](https://www.military.com/off-duty/2020/06/15/edith-white-world-war-ii-code-girl-dies-96.html?ESRC=eb_200616.nl)

## ★ Twenty Years of Fostering Research on Naval Heritage: The NHHC Permitting Program

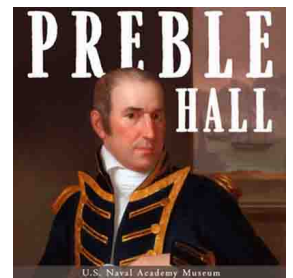
In May 2000, the U.S. Navy established an archaeological research-permitting program that promoted study into its aircraft wrecks and historic ships. Twenty years later, NHHC has issued nearly 60 permits encouraging research and recovery of thousands of artifacts from different sites. A majority of the artifacts that have been discovered are housed in museums across the country. How does it work? Congress passed the [Sunken Military Craft Act](#) in 2004, putting in place measures to protect sunken aircraft and ships. Not only are the wrecks historically important, they could be the final resting place of Sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country or contain environmental or public safety hazards such as unexploded ordnance or oil. Nonintrusive diving is not restricted, but there are penalties for disturbing Navy ships and aircraft because the government retains ownership. For more, [read the blog](#) by Dr. Alexis Catsambis and Blair Atcheson of NHHC's Underwater Archaeology Branch at [The Sextant](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/06/17/twenty-years-of-fostering-research-on-naval-heritage-the-nhhc-permitting-program/>

## ★ Preble Hall Podcasts

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, the U.S. Naval Academy's 63rd Superintendent, Vice Adm. [Sean Buck](#), discusses how COVID-19 affected the academy and the factors that led to his related decisions. This is part of an ongoing series with USNA leaders to capture their recollections. Transcripts of the episodes will be stored in the museum archive and the academy's special collections and archives. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events. Also loaded recently are [the new monuments team and cultural heritage](#) and [the lessons from early Naval Academy discipline](#), where Ensign Julia Speranzo, USNA Class of 2020, discusses her research on discipline during the formative years of the U.S. Naval Academy and the lessons they provide today and for the academy's future.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

## ★ 122 Years of Heroes, History and Humility Honored at NMRTC Bremerton

Just as hospital corpsmen have overcome long odds, difficult conditions, and uncompromising dilemmas throughout their history, they found a way to acknowledge the Hospital Corps' 122nd birthday June 17 at the Navy Medical Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) in Bremerton, WA. It was not an easy task considering festivities and gatherings are not allowed during this COVID-19 pandemic. "You had to be a little creative to celebrate this day. Since we can't do the traditional Hospital Corps ball, your committee came together and organized to honor your history and legacy. There's a lot to be proud of," said Capt. Shannon J. Johnson, NMRTC Bremerton commanding officer. The command arranged a poster board challenge with selected themes. "History of Hospital Corpsmen" placed first. Since their inception June, 17, 1898, hospital corpsmen have been the most decorated enlisted rate in the Navy, with members of their ranks named as recipients of 22 [Medals of Honor](#) and 179 [Navy Crosses](#) since [World War I](#). For more, [read the article](#) at DVIDS. For more on [Navy medicine](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/372376/122-years-heroes-history-and-humility-honored-nmrtc-bremerton>

## ★ Littoral Combat Ship USS *Kansas City* Joins Fleet

On June 20, the U.S. Navy administratively commissioned littoral combat ship USS *Kansas City* via naval message due to public health safety and restrictions of large public gatherings related to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Kansas City* is the 11th Independence-variant ship to join the fleet and second to be named for Kansas City. The name Kansas City was assigned to a heavy cruiser during [World War II](#); however, construction was canceled after one month due to the end of the war. The name Kansas City was also assigned to a replenishment oiler in 1967. That ship was in service during the [Vietnam War](#) and [Operation Desert Storm](#). She was decommissioned in 1994. “This Independence-variant littoral combat ship will continue our proud naval legacy and embody the spirit of the people of Kansas City,” said Secretary of the Navy [Kenneth J. Braithwaite](#). “I am confident the crew of the USS *Kansas City* will extend the reach and capability of our force and confront the challenges of today’s complex world with our core values of honor, courage, and commitment.” For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



**Photo Link:** [https://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=316352&t=1](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=316352&t=1)

## ★ Kelly Walsh Follows in Father’s Footsteps to Challenger Deep

Over Father’s Day weekend, Kelly Walsh, son of retired U.S. Navy Capt. Don Walsh, completed a dive to the Challenger Deep. Challenger Deep is believed to be the deepest known point of the Earth’s oceans. The elder Walsh first explored it back in 1960 with Jacques Piccard in the [Bathyscaphe Trieste](#). “It was a hugely emotional journey for me. I have been immersed in the story of Dad’s dive since I was born—people find it fascinating,” said Kelly. “It has taken 60 years but thanks to EYOS Expeditions and Victor Vescovo we have now taken this quantum leap forward in our ability to explore the deep ocean. The leap in technology from 1960 is immense. Dad spent 20 minutes on the bottom and could see very little. I had the opportunity to spend four hours on the bottom with excellent lighting and a 4K camera running the whole time.” For more, [read the article](#) at *Deeper Blue*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.deeperblue.com/kelly-walsh-follows-in-fathers-footsteps-to-challenger-deep/>

## ★ Retired U.S. Navy Veteran Sews Hundreds of Face Masks for Others

When residents of Anne Arundel County, MD, learned they had to wear face coverings, not everyone had one available to wear. Nilla McIntyre set out to make hundreds of facemasks for those who needed one and didn’t charge anyone a dime. “Nilla and her husband Gerry’s military service comprises both as [U.S. Navy veterans](#),” said Janet Schlosser. “Gerry is a retired chief intelligence specialist on four different vessels plus numerous shore stations spanning his 20-year career. Nilla is a 24-year veteran and yeoman master chief retiree with various stateside and overseas tours. She was the flag writer for the Director, Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Pentagon, followed by flag writer for three vice admirals serving as Commander, Naval Surface Forces. Now, both Nilla and Gerry serve the Cedar Ridge Community where they live as master board members in various capacities.” For more, [read the article](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://patch.com/maryland/odenton/retired-u-s-navy-veteran-sews-hundreds-face-masks-others>

## ★ Webpage of the Week

In commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the “Forgotten War,” this week’s Webpage of the Week is NHHC’s [Korean War](#) page. On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, beginning the war. Within days, Seoul fell to the North Koreans, and President Harry S. Truman authorized U.S. naval and air operations south of the 38th parallel. Over the course of the war, fighting went back-and-forth until an armistice was signed with North Korea in July 1953. Notable clashes include the battles for Seoul, Battle of Heartbreak Ridge, [Battle of Inchon](#), and the [Battle of Chosin Reservoir](#). Check out this newly refurbished page today. It contains information on [operations](#), [people and awards](#), and [imagery and combat art](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/korean-war/korea-operations.html>

## ★ Today in Naval History

On June 23, 1933, USS *Macon* was commissioned. The rigid [airship](#) was constructed around the same time as another rigid airship was built, [USS Akron](#). They were viewed as an improvement from the *Shenandoah* design, having the ability to house and carry other aircraft, although they ended up being the first and last flying carriers. *Akron* was lost in 1933 off the coast of New Jersey during a storm that killed 73, and *Macon* was lost off the Santa Barbara Islands, killing 83. The crashing of *Macon* ended the Navy's program of rigid airship operations.



*For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.*

**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-00001/NH-669.html>